

Reprinted from Playboy Magazine, April 1970

# For a Moderate Majority

by Josiah Lee Auspitz, President of the Ripon Society

Playboy Magazine asked the Ripon Society's President to outline the ideas and beliefs of the group. The following best articulates Ripon's philosophy of progressive Republicanism.

**article By JOSIAH LEE AUSPITZ**

IF THE COMING AGE is to call forth the best energies in the country, those who are engaged in politics must adopt a position that fits reality. Unfortunately, such a stance is not to be found in any existing doctrine—liberal, radical or

conservative—and I would like to describe a politics that will be more suited to the realities of the new decade than those outmoded ideologies. My position is engaged, moderate, progressive—and Republican. And since my reasons for adopting it are neither autobiographical

nor mystical, I expect that they can be shared by a large number of people.

Because dropping out has been predicted as the wave of the future, let me begin by defending engagement. Political engagement will become more popular in the future, for an increasing



number of citizens will realize that what is at stake in American politics is the future of American culture. They will see that the political coalition on which a government is founded shapes not only the distribution of patronage and income but also the rhetoric that moves people to action, the kinds of arguments that seem binding and the life styles that are encouraged and imitated. They will begin to notice that much of the national income (36 percent in 1968) is disbursed through government; that legislation and administrative decisions at all levels of government greatly influence the direction of the economy and can elevate certain groups and regions to positions of dominance. They will see that in times of rapid social change, even the exercise of police and judicial power is not above politics.

All this has always been true, but it has not always been obvious. In this decade, the importance of political engagement will become clearer as a result of several irreversible historical developments.

The most far-reaching of these is the rise of a new political class that behaves in a way the ancient Greeks considered aristocratic. Its members are not aristocratic by virtue of inherited wealth, high birth or social status. Many, in fact, are of humble origin and proud of it. Their political behavior is aristocratic because they seek a meaningful public role that is not directly related to their own pecuniary interest. They have a strong notion of service, of political participation and of public—as opposed to private—good. They prefer to work in organizations in which they can feel themselves colleagues rather than subordinates. They have a strong distaste for hierarchal structures and when subjected to them—in the church, the university, the Army or in government or corporate bureaucracy—they begin to press for reforms. They have a well-developed sense of privacy, of tolerance for dissent and of individual freedom and responsibility. They are willing to devote portions of their lives to voluntary work and may even plan their careers in such a way as to give prominence to social concerns. They tend to choose as leaders not men with an authoritarian style but those who are able to enlist them in a spirit of partnership around projects that have immediate practical consequences while serving a higher and well-articulated vision. They tend to conceive of their lives as a process not of material accumulation nor even of bureaucratic advancement but of learning, adventure and service.

America has always had aristocrats of this sort. Indeed, the republic was founded by such men, and the success of its

democratic system has depended on them. But they have usually been confined to one class. Now a whole generation has grown up under conditions conducive to the growth of public-spiritedness. They have not known the cataclysm of a depression or a world war, so they think of social problems as manageable. They have not known want, so they are not preoccupied with material security. They have been well and freely educated, so they demand convincing reasons for the rules they must obey. And they have had political models that convince them that politics need not be narrowly manipulative. From Eisenhower they saw that it could be decent; from Kennedy, that it could appear noble and exciting; from Martin Luther King, that it could be infused with religious commitment. And even from Richard Nixon they may have learned a vital lesson—the importance of tenacity. Their standards are high and they will not compromise them for short-term advantage.

This description is often said to fit only a small, vocal group at a few elite universities. But those who so dismiss it are well behind the times. The new class is, in fact, a mass aristocracy. Its members can be found at schools in all regions of the country, and also among young labor-union members and white-collar workers. They are in the U.S. Army and in the slums. There are some working in police departments and in businesses. They tend to predominate in the professions, but independence of spirit and public concern, rather than occupational or educational status, are the hallmarks of the new aristocrats. Political engagement will assume new importance in American life, because they will insist on it.

Already, the impact of their concerns is evident, not only in pressures for reform in old institutions but in the invention of new institutional forms. The public-interest lawyer, the Peace Corps volunteer, the community organizer, the environmental planner—these are a few of the roles that the new class has already created for itself. More innovation is bound to come—new kinds of communities and economic enterprises, new techniques for expanding the democratic process itself. These changes—like all innovations—will be pioneered on a small scale, by local and private groups. Yet their chances of spreading will depend on the climate of national politics. It will then be clear that the reasons for engagement on the national level go far beyond a mere desire for participation. National politics will decide whether the mass aristocracy can exist on the terms it has set for itself.

Though the rise of a mass aristocracy is in many ways a fulfillment of American ideals, it also threatens established

procedures of government. The tendency of the new class will be to decentralize major decisions, so as to enable more people to influence them in meaningful ways. Yet, for a generation, truly momentous decisions have been concentrated in a very few hands. In domestic affairs, the New Deal inaugurated an era of emphasis on Federal programs; these have greatly increased the importance of the Federal bureaucracy vis-à-vis state and local governments. Even within state and local governments, the initiative has moved from elected governors and mayors to career civil servants who can extract grants from their opposite numbers in Washington. In foreign affairs, World War Two and the Cold War left us with gigantic military and intelligence-gathering agencies that operate in secrecy and follow hierarchal chains of command. They have shifted initiative from the many to the few—from Congress to the President and, even within the Presidency, to a small group of experts who are immune from Congressional inquiry.

The press and the nation's most prominent intellectuals speak in an idiom that makes these developments seem logical and inevitable. They invoke international crises that justify new increments in the powers of the foreign-policy establishment. To justify a reliance on Federal domestic programs they contrast the high intentions of the President with the backwardness of state and local governments. A crisis mentality abroad and statist liberalism at home have been used to legitimate secrecy, bureaucracy and an overcentralization of policy making.

A continuation of these doctrines will make it impossible for the aspirations of the mass aristocracy to be fulfilled. If the country insists on perceiving as problems only those that require centralized control in Washington, it will be unable to accommodate demands for new political roles; there are simply not enough niches in Washington to go around. To get decisions out of Washington, however, requires that a decentralizing coalition take control of the Federal Government, and this can be achieved only by replacing the New Deal alliance that has been the majority group in this country for nearly 40 years.

Since 1948, there have been clear signs of the decline of the New Deal coalition—and, indeed, its death has been proclaimed quadrennially. Yet the fact remains that nothing has taken its place. Though unpopular wars under Presidents Truman and Johnson have twice shifted the Presidency away from this coalition, the calcified New Dealers remain the Congressional majority, and their ideology of statist liberalism continues to dominate national discourse. All this despite the fact that the coalition and its doctrines are obsolete. The rise of a mass aristoc-



racism is not the only development making the New Deal alliance stagnant.

Modern communications have outdated the New Deal habit of satisfying demands of particular voting blocs and regions. A generation ago, this was the essence of politics. Franklin D. Roosevelt, let us remember, succeeded in getting Senate approval for his Clement Haynsworth—Justice Hugo Black, a former Ku Klux Klan member from Alabama, who seemed to be a sop to the Deep South. Roosevelt was able to bargain through intermediaries for the support of diverse blocs; the courthouses were his gateway to the pre-industrial South, the labor unions and big-city bosses his gateway to working-class and ethnic groups, prominent New Deal bureaucrats his gateway to university intellectuals. He was able to split the business community with policies that saved capitalism, hidden by rhetoric that baited businessmen.

All these techniques are more difficult now, because instant communication makes it virtually impossible to isolate one constituency from another. Any political utterance or action can immediately become known nationally. And though in some ways this draws the country together, it is as likely to divide it. The national news media have not diminished the fundamental cleavages in American society; indeed, they can make them more visible by assuring that statements that appear to favor one group will instantly arouse their antagonists. This makes it harder to slip through programs that favor any one interest group without justifying them in terms of the public interest. Old politicians will, of course, continue to push such programs, but these have become unsatisfactory as the major means for building coalitions. The mass media make it not only possible but necessary to appeal to citizens directly, instead of buying them off through intermediaries. The old groupings are, in any case, losing their importance to those within them. There is a growing constituency that can be appealed to only as citizens.

Affluence has had an even more shattering effect than the news media on the Roosevelt alliance. The New Deal was, after all, a response to the Depression; its major political achievement was to submerge religious, sectional and ethnic differences in economic and class issues. It pitted the have-nots against the haves and posed directly the question "Who gets what?" as the central one for politics. But now that the majority of Americans no longer consider themselves have-nots, politics has moved to other questions. Instead of debating how economic classes shall be rewarded, we

are increasingly asking which sectors of the economy and what styles of life deserve favored treatment by Government. Should we invest more in military spending? In housing? In transportation? Should we aim at increasing consumer spending, at generating full employment or at maintaining a stable currency? How should Government, with its laws on divorce, drug taking, Bible reading and sexual deviance, attempt to shape the activities of the individual? These questions certainly influence who gets what, but they really address a broader concern: "What is the good life?" They inaugurate an era of politics in which issues of life style, conscience, national priorities and goals will assume an important place.

Finally, Government's role in the economy has changed in ways that could not have been anticipated 30 years ago. In those days of economic stagnation, any Government activity at least helped get things going. Today, in an economy that is closely integrated, every Government policy has unintended consequences elsewhere. Farm supports in the Deep South can set migrations in motion that cause a rise in crime and a lowering of the tax base in the urban Northeast. Moreover, the New Deal relationship of Government to business does not provide for the growth of new industries based on technological breakthroughs. In the past, Government has regulated or protected industries; now it should concentrate on creating them. New technologies and demands for new services will make possible the growth of a whole range of activities. The rise of computer, electronic and nursing-home industries is an example. Government should grease the wheels for new economic activity and not just prop up inefficient industries and police corrupt ones.

These changes have produced a fluid period in American politics. An old coalition is in decline and it is not clear what will take its place. A new class is entering politics, new constituencies are being mobilized and new questions are asked of Government. These developments and the struggle to shape a new ruling combination will assure an unprecedented level of political engagement.

Yet engagement in itself is nothing to be applauded. Pre-Hitler Germany and pre-Revolution Russia had an intense degree of political activity just before they collapsed. What counts is not the fervor but the *quality* of involvement in politics. In America today, none of the prevailing political doctrines fits the new realities. I have said that statist liberalism, with its emphasis on bureaucratic solutions, is unsuited to the rise of

a mass aristocracy. To those who recognize this, conservatism, with its sharp critique of New Deal programs, may have an initial appeal. But it, too, discusses realities that are behind us. One can be enlightened by debates between liberals and conservatives, but one should expect no reliable guides to action from either side. On any given issue, one is better advised to consult the facts rather than the ideologies. What is needed is a radical's analysis of the forces at work in society, a liberal's sense of tolerance and his generous impulses toward the disadvantaged, and a conservative's respect for traditional values and his skepticism about bureaucracy. In general, those who can make such a synthesis will be moderates, not because they are moderate in the intensity of their commitment but because they have a sense of balance about social institutions.

It is both the strength and the weakness of the moderate that he can hold in his head more than one idea at a time. He can speak of decentralizing Government programs and still provide for a proper degree of central guidance. He can see that trade-offs must exist between social equality and economic efficiency, between participation and decisiveness, between liberty and order. Above all, he can distinguish between the facts and what he would like the facts to be. Because his position never falls unambiguously under any banner, he lacks a certain chivalric simplicity. Because he tries to preserve a balance, he often seems inconsistent: The moderate may oppose military spending this year and fight to increase it five years from now, because circumstances have changed. Because he deals with complexities and conflict, he prefers rational discussion to confrontation and mediation to violence. Because he recognizes that glorious ends are seldom achieved, he puts a great emphasis on means: He judges policies by their immediate human consequences more than by their presumed effects a generation hence. If his position sounds unglamorous, then we had better start glamorizing it, for our institutions will not survive without the moderate's quiet pragmatism. His skills are needed most now, when American institutions are going out of kilter.

Yet moderation by itself is no longer enough. The great attraction of the moderate has been his ability to preserve stability without undue repression or corruption. It is this ability that has made him trusted to manage large enterprises, to mediate conflicts and to hold high office. But the coming decades will require more than mere balancing skills and good intentions. In times of rapid change, one cannot preserve a sense of



balance without a clear sense of direction—without a firm idea of the drift of events and a philosophy for shaping them. Today's moderate cannot be effective without vision and a strategy for the future.

Now, each of us has his private vision of what he would like America to be—a utopia in which the Dodgers are back in Brooklyn and one's own unique abilities and prejudices have the widest possible scope. This, however, is not sufficient for politics. The vision of the political activist, unlike that of the artist, cannot be idiosyncratic. It must be shared by others and articulated in such a way that diverse people can act on it. A fresh political vision most often emerges from group activity. It may draw on the insights of isolated thinkers, but ultimately it is shaped and tested by many men working together in a common enterprise.

If there is as yet no well-formulated vision for moderates, it is because they have not recognized a common cause. They are so nonideological, so aware of the importance of objective facts that they often fail to see that a disposition to look at the facts in a hardheaded way is itself a unifying ideology. They are so accustomed to assuming themselves in the mainstream of American life that they treat any articulation of their position as a needless intellectual exercise. When they enter politics, it is usually around a single issue or around a magnetic personality. Very rarely do they have the sustained appetite for the petty squabbling and infighting that is necessary to take over the party machinery, which determines the issues and the candidates. Even more rarely do they unite with other moderates into a national movement. Their favored candidates are usually decent, intelligent, pragmatic men who so pride themselves on their independence that they are often unable to team up with others.

Yet if the center is to hold in American politics, moderates must organize. To my knowledge, the Ripon Society is the only group developing a moderate strategy and organization without basing it on a single personality. Its views may provide a starting point from which a wider moderate movement can build. Ripon's approaches have been worked out over a period of seven years by men and women, mostly young, from different parts of the country and from widely differing backgrounds. For the most part, Ripon members have sought not a new philosophy but progressive, practical ways of dealing with problems such as the draft, Vietnam, welfare, Biafran relief and Federal-state relations. Common threads, however, seem to underlie the specific approaches of Ripon members; and new philosophies—of government, political parties and political action—

seem to be emerging.

Take, for instance, some basic questions about the role of Government. The New Deal cleavages follow familiar lines: liberals versus conservatives, more versus less spending, the welfare state versus *laissez faire*, a global foreign policy versus isolationism, bureaucratic controls versus an untrammelled free-enterprise system, a strong President versus states' rights. But when one examines a concrete area of policy, these old cleavages direct one to the wrong issues. They are all different ways of asking a question that has already been answered for the majority of Americans: Should Government try to play a positive role in society? There are still pockets of opinion in which it is popular to say that Government shouldn't; but even here, opposition is usually confined to a few symbolic issues. The governor of Mississippi may find it convenient to declaim against Federal bureaucrats in civil rights, but not when it comes to hurricane relief, cotton subsidies or FHA. Similarly, in foreign policy, those who oppose the UN and foreign aid take a positive satisfaction in advocating U. S. resumption of the bombing of North Vietnam. An activist role for Government, then, is accepted throughout American society. Once this role is recognized, new questions arise about the means and aims of Government's activities, and one's answers to them chart a new set of political cleavages: internationalism versus interventionism, "reprivatization" versus bureaucratization, devolution versus concentration of power, libertarianism versus authoritarianism and a moderating versus a polarizing political strategy.

In foreign policy, as indicated, the new cleavage is between internationalism and interventionism. The internationalist seeks to channel the decisions of foreign governments and factions in the interests of an equitable world order. He has a limited view of American foreign policy as an attempt to influence foreigners but not to impose desired outcomes on them. When opportunities arise, he tries to further those international practices and institutions that can make the process of exerting influence less coercive and more peaceable. The interventionist sets more ambitious goals for American foreign policy, so ambitious as to make direct action by the United States more likely. He is always helping nonnations in the goal of nation building; he makes sure that countries without enemies have the armaments to defend themselves adequately, while those facing determined foes are always kept relying on American force. He prefers unilateral to multilateral action, confrontation to negotiation, and military force to just about anything else.

In the domestic realm, there is an

analogous cleavage between a limited and a hyperactive conception of the role of Government. Government can be seen, on the one hand, as a designer of incentives for outside bodies, as a sort of systems manager for society; and, on the other hand, as a solver of problems by direct bureaucratic means. The more limited view stresses that Government should not do things itself but find ways to get others to do them. It favors guided market systems over a patchwork of bureaucratic subsidies and controls. It relies on reprivatization, on the use of outside institutions—semi-public corporations, profit-making businesses, universities, foundations, voluntary associations—to do work in the public interest instead of having Government itself deliver the necessary goods and services. It will propose contracting out delivery of the mails to a private corporation, moving toward a free market in farming, designing the tax incentives to encourage pollution control, giving money directly to state and local governments and giving cash income subsidies to private citizens.

Opposed to the use of these market-oriented and decentralizing devices is a view of Government that relies on bureaucratic measures. It sets up a Government agency to deal with every problem and measures success by the amount spent by the agency, the number and ethnic balance of its employees and the number of people reached by its services. This is the New Deal way of doing things, and it would be ideal were Government the most efficient sector of our economy. But since Government is flabby, overextended and riddled with patronage, the bureaucratic mode must constantly make up in inflated rhetoric what it lacks in performance.

Reprivatization versus bureaucratization is one way of labeling this new cleavage, but one may also see it as involving the issue of devolution versus concentration of power. Reprivatization is a means of parceling out the execution of policy; devolution, of parceling out the making of policy. Reprivatization is possible because Government need not do things itself to get them done; devolution is necessary because a mass aristocracy will not be satisfied with an overconcentration of policy-making power. Reprivatization is a condition of managerial efficiency and decisiveness; devolution, of social justice and participation.

Reprivatization and devolution are part of a decentralizing process. They are closely related but occasionally in conflict. They are related because any dispersal of the doing of things leads to a widening of a voice in what should be done. Conversely, any widening of a voice in policy will usually lead to demands for changes in operating responsi-



bility. They are in conflict because, as I have said, there are inevitable trade-offs between efficiency and justice, decisiveness and participation. One is best advised to emphasize reprivatization in areas where efficiency is valued (for example, the delivery of the mails), and devolution in areas where people want a voice (for example, education).

Perhaps the most fundamental cleavage is that which poses questions about the ultimate purpose of governance. Should the governing authority seek to protect and enlarge the realm of individual liberty or should it seek to enforce a conformity of behavior that will keep existing institutions running smoothly? When this question is posed in concrete ways—on such issues as privacy, narcotics, dossiers, dissent, disruption, criminal procedure, administrative rules and freedom of information—it is emotionally the most difficult for moderates to face. It would be pleasant to assume that liberty and stability are always reconcilable; but they are not. Free choice always disturbs the existing balance of things, and the presence of it always forces one to ask whether he is devoted to preserving the *status quo* or to seeking new balances that will widen the scope for individual choice. Many who call themselves moderates cling to the *status quo* and, in effect, decide that institutions should be run for the convenience of the rules that exist. They can properly be called reactionary, because the rules of today are always a response to the realities of yesterday. By contrast, progressive moderates want institutions run for the convenience of the individuals within them. They try to anticipate new areas for free choice, to keep institutions on an even keel. They seek institutions that will always be in transition, never in crisis.

The differences between progressive moderates and *status quo*-oriented moderates are fast growing into a conflict between libertarian and authoritarian styles. Rapid social change has brought behavior that does not fit yesterday's realities nor today's rules. The *status quo* moderate feels he must suppress such behavior and becomes authoritarian. The progressive moderate is tolerant of diversity and dissent and adopts a libertarian style. But note that he supports change not for its own sake but for its salutary effects on individuals. Herein lies the difference between a libertarian and a libertine style. The libertarian always seeks a new order that is responsible and humane; the libertine simply glories in the undermining of old customs, without giving a thought to what should take their place.

Note, also, that there is a distinction between a libertarian style and *laissez faire*. *Laissez faire*, the doctrine of pas-

sive government, evolved at the same time as the doctrine of maximum liberty for all, and some thinkers tend to confuse the two. But if Government is to preserve and extend liberty, it cannot merely let natural forces play. There are many citizens who are denied basic liberties by virtue of their race, sex or poverty. There are others who work in institutions such as the Army, the labor union and the university, who have not yet developed adequate guarantees of individual rights. A libertarian style must, therefore, be a liberating one, continually opening up new realms to free choice and mobility.

The reader will have noticed that I have betrayed a marked preference for a given side of each new cleavage. I like internationalism, reprivatization, devolution and libertarianism, and I choose to call them progressive. I don't like interventionism, bureaucratization, concentration of power and authoritarianism. I think, moreover, that thoughtful people who have no vested interest in the *status quo* or in New Deal social engineering will make the same choices, because the progressive side of each cleavage is not only more attractive morally but more workable at this stage of American history. Moreover, it is better suited to the needs of a mass aristocracy and will be so recognized by those members of the new class who have a chance to enter public affairs.

I do not, for these reasons, see the fulfillment of a progressive vision as inevitable. On the contrary; the success of such a vision depends on mobilizing behind it people who have experience in running things and who are not indoctrinated with orthodoxies of either the right or the left. Such people are difficult to find; first, because they suffer from the moderate's coolness to national movements and, second, because many of them are now apolitical in the partisan sense: Though they may be active on selected issues and though they may take an interest in politics, they are disillusioned with politicians and political parties.

They should not, however, be indifferent to the most important structural question affecting the parties and, through them, the future of American society: Will the country be governed by a permanent or a shifting majority; which is to say, will it become polarized or moderate? A permanent majority, as one may read in *The Federalist*, leads inevitably to polarization. Those who are left out of such a majority become alienated and radicalized; they feel they have no legitimate access to power, so they resort to illegitimate means. The permanent majority reacts by repressing the minority; but to do so effectively, it must adopt measures that restrict the

liberty of all citizens. An authoritarian spiral begins, and it will continue until such time as the minority is suppressed or reintegrated into the political process. Mark well that this argument applies to any permanent majority, no matter how enlightened or moderate the people in it may originally be. Hence, when Spiro T. Agnew calls for "a new realignment" based on "positive polarization," he is calling for disaster. His view represents the reactionary side of our last cleavage: a moderating versus a polarizing political strategy.

Right now, there are two major groups in danger of being confined to permanent minority status in the United States: the blacks and certain of the young. The young, as is often pointed out, don't vote in great numbers and are by no means all of a mind. But since the alienated young are more energetic than the rest of the population, they are unusually active in protest politics. Indeed, they enter electoral politics in the greatest numbers through insurgent movements; young blue-collar workers have been the mainstay of George Wallace, college students of Eugene McCarthy. Yet others go outside the system to radical groups on the right and the left. The number of those who do go outside the system is a measure of the inability of two American institutions, which are presently governed almost exclusively by old men—the labor union and the university—to forge necessary patterns of cooperation between the generations. If such patterns were forged, young people would normally choose face-to-face collaboration with an experienced older man to being anonymous followers of a far-off leader. Many of the educated young were overcommitted to the Democratic Party before its 1968 convention in Chicago. Now some are prepared to act as an independent group, which is their only means of gaining leverage on national policy. If they show a willingness to switch parties, neither party will dare use them as a focus for polarizing the electorate.

The blacks are in a similar position. They are locked into the Democratic Party much as the Deep South was until 1964. But, unlike white Southerners, blacks do not control key Congressional committees. For blacks, leverage in Presidential elections is the only regular and effective means of influencing national priorities. Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish sociologist who wrote *The American Dilemma*, recognized that they must take care to hedge their bets on the Presidential parties. They did so in 1956, when Eisenhower-Nixon won 36 percent of the nonwhite vote, and in 1960, when Nixon-Lodge won 32 percent. But Goldwater's disastrous Southern strategy drove blacks out of the G. O. P.; and it would have required a positive gesture, such as put-



ting Lindsay, Percy or Brooke on the national ticket, to win them back in any appreciable numbers in 1968. At the moment, black Americans are beginning to feel like a permanent minority.

Talk by Republican leaders of a "silent majority" and a "middle-American" strategy only reinforce this feeling. True to the insights of *The Federalist*, some blacks are becoming increasingly alienated and radicalized and are responding to an ideology of violence. Others, however, are looking for new ways to become a swing voting group that can exercise the kind of leverage that farmers had in the post-World War Two period. In the 1969 off-year elections, these blacks gave Republicans healthy support—26 percent for Cahill in New Jersey, 31 percent for Specter in Philadelphia, 46 percent for Capra in New Haven, 53 percent for Holton in Virginia and 80 percent for Lindsay in New York City. In none of these areas did the Nixon-Agnew ticket exceed ten percent of the black vote. It is clear that many blacks would like to hang loose between the two parties.

A moderating political strategy would assure that they are allowed to do so, not only for their sake but for the sake of the white majority. It would result in shifting coalitions instead of a permanent majority. It would aim at a supple, responsive political system in which now one, now another political group has access to power. Educated by such access, each group would moderate the shrillness of its rhetoric. The best way to get Americans to lower their voices is to give them, access to the quiet corridors of power.

How can the present party system be shaped to assure, at the very least, a moderate majority? How can it also aim toward the progressive goals of internationalism, reprivatization, devolution and libertarianism? One can devise a political strategy that aims at the best for American society—a progressive vision—while avoiding the worst, a permanent polarized majority.

To the voting public, American politics appears to be dominated by a two-party system; and by the time an election comes around, so, in fact, it is. But in the really decisive period for political action—the time when national leadership is contested—a different picture emerges. The Republican Party turns out to be three parties—the conservative party (which looks to Reagan for leadership), the regular G. O. P. (Nixon's base) and the progressive G. O. P. (whose present leaders are Lindsay, Percy, Hatfield and Goodell). The Democrats are divided into four parties—the Southern Democrats (from Eastland to L. B. J.), the big labor-big city machine axis (George Meany-Richard Daley), the old liberals (centered in the Americans for Democratic Action) and the new liberals, who are the presently leaderless remnants of the McCarthy-Kennedy insurgency. Then

there is the Wallace movement. In all, there are eight parties, with some overlap among them by people who hedge their bets by belonging to more than one.

Notice that the eight-party system is defined not by constituency groups in the voting public but by networks of contributors and political activists. Modern communications permit any group that has the money, the brains and the attractive leadership to mount a national campaign to find its own voting constituency through the news media and advertising. New national party networks can emerge in a relatively short time: The Wallace party and the new liberals are creations of the 1960s; and the conservative party can be dated from the founding of *National Review* in the mid-1950s. The reason more parties are not formed is that our election laws are designed to force action through the two-party system. The influence of the eight parties on national policy is felt largely by the bargains they strike in the context of the two-party system. Even the Wallace movement sought to win influence by deadlocking the election and bargaining with the two major parties.

There are two choices, then, that an engaged person must make about his party. The first is through which of the eight subparties to work; the second is for which of the two parties to vote on Election Day. Of the two parties, in my opinion, the Republican comes closer to the progressive vision; devolution and reprivatization are concepts that come easily to it, largely because it has been deprived of Federal patronage for more than a generation. Republicans have found, somewhat to their own surprise, that the arguments they have been using against New Deal programs have suddenly turned progressive. It is very much as President Nixon has said: Power has been flowing to Washington for more than a generation; now it's time for it to flow back to the states, the private sector and the people. Within the Democratic Party, the New Liberals are the only group urging decentralizing initiatives, but they are hopelessly overpowered by the three other groups, as was evident in 1968 when George Meany, Richard Daley and Lyndon Johnson nominated Hubert Humphrey for President. Some younger New Liberals may persevere in trying to reform their party; others, such as Daniel P. Moynihan, find a more sympathetic audience among Republicans.

On the issues of internationalism, libertarianism and a moderating strategy, there is somewhat less agreement within the G. O. P. Typically, the conservative party and the progressive G. O. P. struggle against each other to win the soul of the President and the regular party. In foreign policy, the progressive G. O. P. is now the more internationalist, the con-

servative more interventionist; but the lines of cleavage are by no means clear-cut. The President (and the regular party) have been tending toward internationalism, but external events could change this. On libertarian issues, the strongest spokesmen have long been conservatives, but considerations of political strategy tempt them to support anti-libertarian rhetoric. Many feel they must forge an alliance with the Wallace party and, accordingly, adopt an authoritarian pose on life-style issues. They try to polarize a majority on the right-wing side of questions such as dissent, marijuana and Supreme Court decisions on equal rights. Yet, in actual practice, the conservatives cannot go as far as the Wallace constituency would like. The libertarian ethic is so deeply ingrained in their party that it will not accept measures that really reverse progress on individual rights. The result is the present syndrome of overpromising, in which a conservative Attorney General tries to look more authoritarian than he can hope to be. Conservative Republicans might be truer to their individualism were they less afraid that it would attract so many liberals into the party as to threaten their control of the apparatus.

The two major cleavages within the G. O. P., then, involve foreign policy and political strategy. The foreign-policy debate is now in the hands of the President and of external events. The debate over political strategy thus becomes the focus of the struggle for the soul of the party. The conservative party favors an electoral strategy that courts the Wallace vote; the progressive, one that woos young, black and middle-class voters. The issue is posed most sharply in the South, where two theories have emerged about the future of the Republican Party. The progressive theory was summarized in *Southern Republicanism and the New South*, published by the Ripon Society in 1966. It urged formation of a G. O. P. based in the newly industrializing areas of the South and competing actively for black votes. The conservative theory, put forth in 1969 in *The Emerging Republican Majority*, by Kevin Phillips, an assistant to Attorney General John Mitchell, aims at building a lily-white party based on present Democratic support in the rural, one-party South. To date, the progressive theory has been winning, largely because those running on it have won. With the exception of Strom Thurmond, a renegade Democrat who would be elected if he ran as a vegetarian, the major Republicans to win high office in the South have sought the votes of the blacks and the enlightened middle class. Men such as Winthrop Rockefeller, Linwood Holton and Howard Baker, Jr., have run



with the endorsement of civil rights groups and have actively sought black votes. The major hope for the conservative strategy thus appears to rest on the Thurmond model of getting established segregationist Democrats to convert to the G. O. P.

Outside the South, the conservative theory writes off what Kevin Phillips in one place calls the "Yankee-tainted" states and counties—New England and the areas that were settled by New Englanders. These happen to be the areas that founded the Republican Party and have most staunchly preserved its historic commitment to civil rights—from passage of the 13th, 14th and 15th constitutional amendments to legislation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Philadelphia Plan of 1969. The progressive G. O. P. is truer to this tradition than is the conservative party. The G. O. P. is, after all, the party of Lincoln, not of Calhoun.

The reader will again have detected my preferences. I feel that the progressive G. O. P. is the one to work through in the eight-party system; and if it wins the battle for political strategy, the Republican Party that emerges will be unqualifiedly the most worthy of support. If it loses, conservative strategists have predicted gleefully that its constituents will leave the G. O. P., which will, in that case, probably go the way of the Whigs, who assembled a retrograde coalition that won power for a brief period and then vanished from American history.

The outcome of the struggle would

be certain were it not for the lassitude of moderates. Because the progressive G. O. P. has mobilized in the past only around personalities, it now lacks the political infrastructure essential to a successful political movement. Because many of its present leaders suffer from a certain prima donna-ism, the new movement will not be built from the top down. This provides a historic opportunity for young leadership. There are already some indications that the harvest can be great. Moderates are best at intelligent discussion, at persuasion, at developing workable proposals. When they decide to cooperate, they are able to pioneer new patterns of collaboration between generations and to achieve results. They are capable of exciting others with ideas and eliciting sustained commitment. If they lead from their strength—not mass demonstration but reason, competence, persistence and tough-minded idealism—they can revolutionize the political system.

The experience of the Ripon Society may give some hope for these quiet tactics. Begun in December 1962 with only 17 members and named after Ripon, Wisconsin, the birthplace of the Republican Party, it is still far from a mass organization; yet it has moved to change the tone of political debate in the 11 cities in which it now has chapters. It attempts to reach out to groups that have never considered voting Republican and to build bridges to the professional,

academic and business communities. It offers politicians research, political aid and a monthly magazine with independent criticism and positive proposals. Its members adhere to the Republican Party not for what it is but for what they can make it become. They are now working at the White House, in Government agencies and on political staffs at all levels of government, and some will be running for office this year.

Ripon's mottoes have been simple all along. Its members have sought not expedient slogans but "the ideas whose time is yet to come"; and many of their programs for welfare reform, a volunteer Army, revenue sharing and policy toward China and Vietnam have helped shape national policy. They have sought not heroes to admire but ways to galvanize themselves to action. As the society's first statement said, well before this author had become a member:

This, then, is a call to action. . . .

The question is often asked, "Where are the leaders of the new Republican Party?" We have shown just how we need such men. If we cannot find them, let us become them.

This spirit of challenge, from Ripon and other young, engaged groups, is desperately needed to shake up both of America's decrepit political parties.



---

The Ripon Society seeks to attract creative young people to active participation in Republican politics. As the Society has built bridges between the Party and the nation's campuses and professional communities, it has become an important resource to Republicans who face an ever more youthful and better informed electorate. Ripon also works to infuse the GOP with new ideas so that it may become the party of initiative rather than the party of response. For only in this way can Republicans avoid the equally unsatisfying role of being either the "me too" party or the "not me" party.

The Society believes that the two-party system in America must be preserved and strengthened. A strong and constructive Republican party is essential to that effort. And just as the American nation is pluralistic, so must a vital GOP be widely diversified. It must more actively involve intellectuals, minority groups, laborers and urban dwellers. It must win the confidence of those who are not at home in the politics of another generation: the new middle classes of our suburbs, the young who are more concerned with opportunity than security, the moderates of the New South.

Ripon maintains that if the Republican party is to deserve majority status, it must find means to strengthen state and local governments. It must bring the resources of organized labor and private enterprise to bear on social problems. It must understand and deal creatively with new challenges in fields such as education, computerized information collection and social welfare. It must be unequivocally committed to the full realization of civil rights for all citizens. In foreign policy, it must reject simplistic thinking, encourage frank debate, and make a serious attempt to understand the foreign cultures with which Americans will increasingly deal.

The Ripon Society believes that the Republican party can become the party of adventure and excitement. It can break new ground in American politics and become a flexible instrument for exploring the challenges of the decades to come. Ripon believes that it can help the Republican party to identify and claim the issues of the future, to raise the questions others do not ask, to grasp ideas "whose time is yet to come."